

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 04345 252021Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FOR: ARA/LA/MRSD/L

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: CI, ELAB
SUBJ: RIOS CHALLENGES GOC OVER "PARALLEL UNIONISM"

REF: (A) SANTIAGO 4011

1. EDUARDO RIOS, PRESIDENT OF THE MARITIME CONFEDERATION (COMACH), CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 18. HE CONDEMNED GOC INTERFERENCE IN THE MARITIME SECTOR AND CALLED FOR ELECTIONS TO DECIDE THE ISSUE. ALL MAJOR DAILIES REPORTED HIS REMARKS MAY 19. CONSERVATIVE "TERCERA", MAY 20, RAN THE STRONGEST EDITORIAL DEFENDING THE INDEPENDENCE OF TRADE UNIONS THAT WE HAVE SEEN.

2. THE EDITORIAL PROMINENTLY NOTED RIOS' REMARK THAT HE WAS FREELY ELECTED AND WOULD NOT STEP ASIDE WITHOUT SIMILAR DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES. IT THEN FOCUSED ON THE ACCUSATION THAT "CERTAIN SECTORS OF THE GOVERNMENT" WERE INFLUENCING POLICY TO TAKE OVER THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. RUNNING WITH THIS BALL "TERCERA" EMPHASIZED THE SIMILARITY OF THE COMACH PROBLEM TO ATTEMPTS UNDER THE ALLENDE REGIME TO SET

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 04345 252021Z

UP PARALLEL UNIONS. THE EDITORIAL CALLED UPON THE MINISTRY OF LABOR TO INVESTIGATE RIOS' CHARGES AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS AND TO PUNISH SEVERELY ANYONE RESPONSIBLE. THE WORKING PEOPLE, IT SAID, DESERVED MORE THAN THE DECEITFULLY FRAUDULENT UNIONISM THAT EXISTED UNDER ALLENDE. THE PAPER ENDED ON THE NOTE THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO "BEGIN INVESTIGATION OF ALL TYPES OF SIMILAR ARRANGEMENTS AND GET RID OF THESE EFFORTS TO CONFUSE

THE CHILEAN WORKER".

3. MARTIN BUSTOS, HEAD OF THE NEW PARALLEL COMACH, REACTED MAY 20 BY APPEALING TO RIOS TO STEP DOWN GRACEFULLY. BUSTOS' PUBLIC STATEMENT WASN'T ANY TOO GRACEFUL ITSELF. IT SUGGESTED RIOS' PATRIOTISM SHOULD LEAD HIM TO DEVOTE HIS EFFORTS TO REBUILDING CHILE RATHER THAN ENGAGING IN PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY. BUSTOS SAID RIOS SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT HE COULD DO NOTHING FOR THE WORKERS IN THE MARITIME SECTOR AND SHOULD HAVE THE COMMON SENSE TO SEE THAT IT WAS THE WORKERS WHO HAD REMOVED HIM. BUSTOS NOTED THAT RIOS IN FACT HAD BEEN ELECTED VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMACH AND ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY ONLY AFTER THE FORMER PRESIDENT, A COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER, LEFT.

4. COMMENT: IN COMPARING THE GOC'S TRADE UNION POLICY WITH THAT OF ALLENDE, "TERCERA" HITS A NERVE. THE GOC-ABETTED OUSTER OF RIOS, AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN THE INTER-NATIONAL LABOR MOVEMENT, COULD BE USED ABROAD BY DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNIONISTS WHO WISH TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH EXTREMES. "LA TERCER'S" STAND IN OPPOSITION TO THE GOC'S CLEAR LINE OF ACTION IS SURPRISING.
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